

Road Safety

May 29, 2020

Why in news?

Recently, Parliament enacted the Motor Vehicles (Amendment), 2019 law.

Some data (according to the WHO Global Report on Road Safety 2018)

- Road accident severity measured by the number of persons killed per 100 accidents
- India, ranks 1st in the number of road accident deaths across the 199 countries reported in 2018 followed by China and US.
- National Highways which comprise of 1.94 percent of total road network, accounted for 30.2 per cent of total road accidents and 35.7 percent of deaths in 2018. State Highways which account for 2.97% of the road length accounted for 25.2 percent and 26.8 percent of accidents and deaths respectively.
- Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh remain accounted for the highest number of road accidents and death on account of road accidents respectively in 2018
- For three consecutive years now, young adults in the age group of 18 – 45 years accounted for nearly 69.6 percent of road accident victims.
- Traffic violations related to driving on the wrong side of the road accounted for 5.8% of the accident related deaths. Use of mobile phones accounted for 2.4% of the deaths with drunken driving accounting for 2.8% of the persons killed.

Reasons for road accidents in India

Road accidents are multi-causal and are the result of interplay of various factors.

These can broadly be categorized into those relating to (i) human error, (ii) road environment and (iii) Vehicular condition.

1.Human Error

1. Traffic rule violations,
2. Driving without valid driver license
3. Non-use of safety devices-Helmets and Seat belts

2.Road Environment:

The causes related to the category of road environment include

1. Accidents happening in a particular geographical area (residential, commercial institutional etc.)
2. Those related to the type of road features including straight, curved, steep etc.
3. Type of junction & type of traffic control
4. Weather condition: Weather condition affects road surface condition and the visibility of the motorist, Thereby increasing the chances of mishaps. Adverse weather conditions such as heavy rain, thick fog and hail Storms make Driving riskier as visibility reduces and the road surface gets slippery.

3.Vehicular condition includes cases of accidents associated with overloading and the age of the vehicles Old vehicles are prone to breakdowns and are more prone to malfunction. E.g: overloaded trucks are known to cause accidents due to

1. Truck tyres bursting from excess weight;
2. Brakes wearing out due to friction caused by the overloading;
3. Road collapses caused by overloaded trucks;
4. Roll-over of trucks caused by the center of gravity shifting from overloading;
5. Excess weight adding momentum to a truck traveling downhill and severely slowing it down when traveling up

an incline.



Measures taken by the government

India is committed to bringing down fatalities from road accidents by 50 percent by 2020 as a Signatory to the Brasilia declaration.

What is Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety

The declaration was signed at the Second Global High-Level conference on Road Safety held in Brazil. Through the Brasilia Declaration Countries plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3.6: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

United Nations has also declared 2010-2020 as the decade of action for Road Safety.

The main points of the Brasilia Declaration are:

- Countries should form transport policies in order to favor more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and using public transport.
- It highlights strategies to ensure the safety of all road users, by improving laws and enforcement; making roads safer through infrastructural modifications; ensuring that vehicles are equipped with life-saving technologies; and enhancing emergency trauma care systems.

Measures:

- The Ministry has formulated a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue of road safety based on Education, Publicity and awareness campaigns, Engineering (both of roads and vehicles), Enforcement and Emergency Care

1. Education measures:

(A) Driver Training: The Government is taking steps to strengthen the system of driver licensing and training to improve the competence and capability of drivers.

- Model Institutes of Driving Training and Research (IDTR) in States / UTs. Till date 29 IDTR has been sanctioned out of which 16 are functional. Remaining is under construction.
- The Ministry has launched a scheme for setting up of Driving Training Centre (DTC) at district level to provide quality training to commercial vehicle drivers to improve road and environment safety and strengthen overall mobility on roads. Under the scheme, the Ministry shall provide one-time assistance to the extent of 50% of the project cost, subject to a maximum of Rs. 1.00 crore, for setting up the DTC.

(B) Publicity and awareness campaigns

- Spreading Awareness through TV, Films, Radio Spots and Print media: The Government has been undertaking various publicity measures in the form of telecasting on T.V, Radio, Cinema, printing calendars with road safety messages as also by conducting seminars & exhibitions on road safety with messages for various segments of road users viz. Pedestrians, cyclists, school children, heavy vehicle drivers, etc.
- Appointment of Shri Akshay Kumar as Road Safety Brand Ambassador: Launched three short films for generating public awareness towards road safety.
- Involvement of NGOs and other Stakeholders: Road safety is an issue that can only be addressed together with all stakeholders-State Government, Corporate houses, Auto industry and their associations, Universities, institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations and the society at large.
- The Ministry observes National Road Safety Week every year with the objective of creating awareness on road

safety. 29th Road Safety week was observed in April, 2018.

- Research in Road Safety: The Government encourages increased activity in programmes of road safety research by identifying priority areas, funding, and research in those areas adequately and establishing centres of excellence in research and academic institutions.
- The Government will facilitate dissemination of the result of research and identified examples of Good practice through publication, training, conferences, workshops and websites.

2.Engineering (both of roads and vehicles) measures:

2.1. Road engineering measures taken by the ministry are as follows:

- Identification and rectification of accident black spots
- Installing immediate cautionary measures to alert and caution the road users about the road accident black spot through signs, solar blinkers and speed reduction measures till the black spots are rectified through long term permanent measures.
- Road Safety Audits:
 - Detailed guidelines for taking up road safety audits on National Highways have been notified. Road safety has been made an integral part of road design at the planning stage itself.
 - Road Safety Audits at different stages have been made part and parcel of all road development projects on EPC and BOT modes.
 - Out of a total of 46,651 kms of NHs under NHAI, a total of 26,811 kms of National Highways have been audited.
- Installation of crash barriers: Roadside Safety Crash barriers are installed at roadside hazards
- Speed control: Mandatory sign boards are provided to indicate the speed limit on NH/expressways stretches.

Moreover, traffic calming measures are also provided to reduce the speed of vehicles.

- Further, NHA is taking several road engineering/traffic calming measures to curb speed on minor roads/NHs such as
 - rumble strips or bar marking at the approaches of the major junctions on NHs,
 - speed limit signs at desired locations of NHs network,
 - speed breaker and associated signage on side roads,
 - Flashing amber beacons for traffic approaching a junction or a mid-block median opening of NHs.

2.2. Vehicular engineering measures:

The Government is taking steps to ensure that safety features are built in at the stage of design, manufacture, Usage, operation and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized vehicles in line with international Standards and practices in order to minimize adverse safety and environmental effects of vehicle operation on Road users (including pedestrians and bicyclists) and infrastructure. Prominent among various notifications Issued by the Ministry in this regard are as follows:

- Compulsory Anti-lock Braking System(ABS) System
- Automatic Head Light On: In a bid to make roads safer for two-wheelers in India, the Ministry has mandated 'Automatic Headlamp On' (AHO) in two wheelers.
- Crash Tests: The crash tests for all the light motor vehicles have been notified by the Ministry for implementation.
- Air Bags: AIS- 145 safety norms kicked in from July 1 2019 and make it mandatory to have fitment of driver Air Bags, seatbelt reminder for driver and co-driver, rear parking sensors and an overall speed alert on all the LMV passenger vehicles.

- **Red Beacon Lights:** With a view to strengthening healthy democratic values in the country, MoRTH has notified doing away with beacons of all kinds atop all categories of vehicles in the country, except those connected with emergency, operation & relief services, etc.

3.1. Enforcement measures:

1. **Good Samaritans guidelines:** To protect the Good Samaritans from harassment on the actions being taken by them to save the life of the road accident victims, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways have issued guidelines to be followed by hospitals, police and all other authorities for the protection of Good Samaritan. By this, now People need not hesitate to help the road accident victims to reach the nearest hospital, in case they come across one.
2. **Enforcement of Road Safety Laws:** Enforcement of traffic rules and motor vehicle rules are extremely important components of road safety and accident mitigation measures which are under the purview of State Policy and Transport Departments.

Motor Vehicles(Amendment), 2019

Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, 2019 had made provision for stricter penalties for various traffic rules, Violations with the objective of strengthening enforcement and ensuring greater compliance. The act as seeks to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to provide for road safety. The Act provides for grant of licenses and Permits related to motor vehicles, standards for motor vehicles, and penalties for violation of these provisions.

- **Compensation for road accident victims:** This act increased the minimum compensation for hit and run cases as follows: (i) in case of death, from Rs 25,000 to two lakh rupees, and (ii) in case of grievous injury, from

Rs 12,500 to Rs 50,000.

- **Compulsory insurance:** The act requires the central government to constitute a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India.
- **Good Samaritans:**
 - The Bill defines a Good Samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident.
 - Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in providing assistance to the victim.
- **Recall of vehicles:**
 - The act allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users. The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to:
 1. Reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or
 2. Replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications.
- **Road Safety Board:** The act provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the central government through a Notification. The Board will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic Management including:
 1. Standards of motor vehicles,
 2. Registration and licensing of vehicles,
 3. Standards For road safety, and
 4. Promotion of new vehicle technology.

- **Offences and penalties:** The act increases penalties for several offences under the Act. For example, the maximum penalty for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000. If a vehicle manufacturer fails to comply with motor vehicle standards, the penalty will be a fine of up to Rs 100 crore, or imprisonment of up to one year, or both.
- **Taxi aggregators:** The act defines aggregators as digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes (taxi services). These aggregators will be issued licenses by state. Further, they must comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

3.2. Emergency (Post-crash response and Trauma Care)

- **Emergency Medical Services for road Accidents:** The essential functions of such a service would include the provision of rescue operation and administration of first aid at the site of an accident and the transport of the victim from accident site to nearby hospital. Hospitals alongside the National Highways and State Highways would be adequately equipped to provide for trauma care and rehabilitation.
- **Incident Management System on NH:** The facilities of patrol vehicles, recovery cranes and ambulances with trained paramedics are provided.